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RUALSFJ/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY
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RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TOKYO 001976

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR STRESSES TRILATERAL COOPERATION IN CALL
ON ROK AMBASSADOR KWON

Classified By: Ambassador John V. Roos; reasons 1.4 (b/d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) During his August 27 introductory call on South Korean Ambassador Kwon Chul-hyun, the Ambassador stressed the importance of enhancing trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK), particularly with respect to dealing with North Korea. Kwon concurred that trilateral cooperation is important, underscoring that the Lee Myung-bak administration's policies have helped raise ROK-Japan relations to the best levels since the two countries normalized relations in 1965, although bilateral relations remain vulnerable to political backlash from history issues and territorial disputes. Kwon did not project any significant impact on ROK-Japan relations if the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) were to take power after the August 30 Lower House elections, except for the prospects of having to re-establish personal connections among the two countries' officials and politicians. Kwon asked the Ambassador to convey the ROK government's request for the U.S. Government to support Seoul's candidacy as hosting nation for the fourth G-20 summit, as well as for a review on current restrictions on sharing with the ROK space launch technology, given the recent failure of South Korea's first space rocket mission. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On August 27, the Ambassador called on South Korean Ambassador Kwon Chul-hyun at the Republic of Korea (ROK) Embassy. Kwon was accompanied by ROK Embassy Political Division Director Choi Bong-kyu and First Secretary Kim Jimin. Kwon thanked the Ambassador for visiting the ROK Embassy one week earlier (immediately following the presentation of his credentials) to sign the condolence book for former President Kim Dae-jung. He noted that Presidents Obama and Lee Myung-bak had agreed in their Joint Vision Statement during the June 16 summit to work toward a

future-oriented alliance, spanning areas beyond diplomatic and security issues, to include economic, social, and cultural ties between the United States and ROK. Kwon urged the Ambassador to take interest in Korean issues in addition to the other myriad issues he needs to cover in his capacity as ambassador. Kwon noted that left-leaning administrations had been in power for the past ten years in the ROK, taking on policies and positions that led to considerable misunderstandings between the United States and South Korea, which also caused strains in the U.S.-ROK alliance. He asked that the Ambassador recognize that the vast majority of South Koreans recognize the sacrifices made by the United States during the Korean War, appreciate the United States for its military and economic support to the ROK since then, and see the United States as a true ally.

ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS: BEST EVER, BUT VULNERABLE

13. (C) Responding to the Ambassador's query on the state of ROK-Japan relations, Kwon commented that the relationship between South Korea and Japan are complicated, embodying aspects that might be difficult for third countries to fathom. The unfortunate history between the two countries, as well as lingering territorial disputes, often act as stumbling blocks in an otherwise progressive relationship. Kwon noted that shortly following his arrival and President Lee's first official visit to Japan, Lee directed the ROK government to move forward on bilateral relations in a

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future-oriented manner despite many unresolved issues from the previous administration. This allowed the ROK government to build what is arguably the best state of bilateral relations between South Korea and Japan since normalization of diplomatic relations in 1965. Nevertheless, bilateral relations can always be derailed if history issues or territorial disputes over Dokdo/Takeshima islets flare up, Kwon observed. He added that trilateral cooperation with the United States is important for ensuring that such issues would not cause setbacks to ROK-Japan relations.

POST-AUG 30 ELECTIONS: NO BIG IMPACT, EXCEPT ON NETWORKS

14. (C) On the issue of the impact of the August 30 Lower House elections on the state of ROK-Japan relations, Kwon noted that large-scale changes are unlikely. The ROK government expects some progress in minor issues, including whether long-term Korean residents in Japan should be given the right to participate in prefectural and local elections. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) will likely support this, in contrast to the long-standing opposition by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). He pointed out, however, that ROK officials and politicians would need to rebuild their extensive network of personal connections with Japanese counterparts if a DPJ-led government were to take power. He had foreseen this possible political transition when he arrived as ambassador, and he had made efforts to minimize the likely impact by reaching out to DPJ politicians.

IMPORTANCE OF TRILATERAL COOPERATION WITH JAPAN

15. (C) The Ambassador conveyed once more his message of condolence for former President Kim, who, he added, was greatly respected among Washington officials. He concurred that the U.S.-ROK alliance is a strong relationship, one that reaches beyond traditional diplomatic and security ties to a wide spectrum of common interests, not the least of which are the ties among both countries' high-tech industries. He stressed that the U.S. alliance relationships with both the ROK and Japan are critical to U.S. security policy in the

region. As U.S. Ambassador to Japan, moreover, he seeks to strengthen trilateral cooperation among the United States, ROK, and Japan, particularly on the three governments' approaches to the DPRK problem. He welcomed improvements in bilateral relations between the ROK and Japan and pledged to provide any possible assistance in facilitating communication between the ROK and Japanese governments as part of enhancing trilateral cooperation.

ROK REQUEST FOR U.S. SUPPORT IN HOSTING 4TH G-20

¶6. (C) Kwon stated that President Lee plans to attend the September 20 UN General Assembly and the Pittsburgh G-20 Summit. He expressed hope that, through the respective bilateral summits taking place on the margins of the G-20, the trilateral relationship among the United States, Japan, and the ROK would develop further, especially with a new Japanese Prime Minister in place. He pointed out that the ROK is due to chair the fourth G-20 Summit and called for U.S. support for the ROK's candidacy as hosting nation in ¶2010. The Ambassador responded that he would pass the message to Washington.

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RESTRICTIONS ON SHARING SPACE LAUNCH TECHNOLOGY

¶7. (C) Kwon also raised the issue of the failed August 25 mission of South Korea's first space rocket to place a satellite into orbit. He asked that the United States, "as an ally," reconsider its restrictions under the Missile Technology Test Regime (MTCR) on sharing space launch vehicle technology with the ROK, pointing out that the Korean rocket, the Naro, was partially built using Russian technology.
ROOS